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Testimony to the House Committee on Government Reform
August 14th, 2006

Illegal immigration has a significant and adverse affect on local government. San Diego's proximity to the southern U.S. border and the fact the County of San Diego is responsible for providing essential services only amplifies this effect. I believe the illegal immigration issue is far greater than most are willing to admit. While current law and circumstance make it very difficult to accurately quantify the impact of the problem, it is immense.

My colleagues on the Board of Supervisors and I have commissioned a study to approximate the cost of illegal immigration on the county treasury. Unfortunately, the study will not be completed until late November.

Part of the problem is many children of illegal immigrants are born in the United States and are legal citizens of this country, entitled to all of the privileges that citizenship provides. This means regions across America, and particularly those close to the border are bearing the weight of providing services to children whose parents are often not paying taxes for those services.

Border counties have younger impoverished populations. For example, according to the US/Mexico Border Counties Coalition study "At the Cross Roads," in border counties 43% of children between 0 and 17 years old live in poverty. In non-border counties only 34.8% of that population lives in poverty. With high levels of childhood poverty, there is a greater demand for government services.

One of the services San Diego County provides which is heavily utilized by illegal immigrants is pre and post natal care administered by public health nurses. While the child, by virtue of being born on U.S. soil is legal, the mother may not be. This significantly increases workloads and wait times to see public health nurses, making it more difficult for those who are legal residents to get care.

While most people who are in violation of immigration laws are here to work, some are here to take further advantage of our open society. The North County Regional Gang Task Force is a team of local, state, and federal law enforcement groups. They target sophisticated street gangs involved in major narcotic sales, transportation and smuggling, as well as violent crimes. In 2005 out of 448 arrests, 232 were in violation of immigration laws. For the first half of 2006, the team has already arrested 433 individuals, 367 of those being in violation of immigration laws, a staggering 84.8 percent. This is extremely troublesome. With the average daily cost per inmate in county jails being 90 dollars per day, and an average stay of 6 days, the cost alone of the 2006 illegal immigrant arrests is at least 198,180 dollars. This is not including the expense of

apprehension. I believe our porous borders and weak immigration laws pose a considerable public safety risk.

Another example of that risk is the Horse Fire that last month burned almost 17,000 acres of the Cleveland National Forest. According to the California Department of Forestry the cost to fight the fire was over 6.8 million dollars. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported on July 26, 2006 the fire was apparently the result of a campfire abandoned by illegal immigrants.

While the County of San Diego does not have jurisdiction over education, the cost of even one child to the education system in California is significant. According to the County Office of Education the 2006-2007 cost per pupil is 11,264 dollars. Assuming just 100 children of illegal parents attend school this year; the cost will be 1,126,400 dollars. While we can't identify how many are enrolled, we can see the cost to taxpayers to provide them an education is significant.

According to the US/Mexico Border Counties Coalition study, if the border counties were the 51st state they would rank 1st for federal crimes, 2nd in incidences of tuberculosis, 3rd in deaths due to hepatitis, 50th in percent of population that has completed high school, and 51st in number of health care professionals.

Reform is necessary for state and local government to continue to provide quality services. State and local governments do not control immigration or border policy but have to live with the effects of those policies. The cost of inaction rises every day. We are not talking about thousands of dollars, but millions. Every dollar spent on providing services to illegal immigrants, or their children, is a dollar that is not used to provide services to tax paying citizens. This is unacceptable.